

## How to select a Locum GP: A Guide for Practice Managers

The increasing workload – and the opportunities – for GPs in 2011 means that the availability of high quality locum support to meet temporary staffing needs, at short notice, is more important than ever before, according to medical staffing agency [Ambition 24locums](#).

The number of GPs is not rising in proportion to the growing demands on primary care that result from advances in medicine and the escalating expectations of patients. The absence of a GP, due to illness or an unfilled vacancy for example, can present a major headache for a busy practice that is trying to maintain consistently high levels of care provision day-to-day.

Finding a locum with relevant skills and experience is an important and recurring task for many practices, at a time when there is acute shortage in many regions. The locum is usually unknown to the practice, and if there are issues concerning competency or compatibility, these may not emerge until problems have arisen.

Care in the selection and briefing of locum agencies can substantially reduce any risks associated with the appointment, and offer considerable time-savings in the long run. Some simple checks on the agency, with clear instructions in key areas concerning your locum requirements, will help to maximise the availability of quality locum cover, whenever you need it.

A short check-list of criteria for selecting and briefing agency is suggested below:-

1. Does the agency provide 24-7 support, 365 days a year? The requirement for locum cover can arise unexpectedly and at any time, because of staff illness and other issues. Also, you want provision to contact the agency at the first opportunity if a problem arises concerning the appointment
2. Is the agency accredited with NHS Buying Solutions? This is operated by the Government Procurement Service, working closely with the Department of Health (DH) as a key partner in the delivery of the **Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP)** Procurement programme
3. Consider your specific practice needs, and the type of experience and qualifications required of a locum. For example, a 'walk-in centre' may require the GP to undertake child immunisations and similar tasks usually performed by a practice nurse in other surgeries. If you offer family planning, a DFFP qualification will be required. Also, consider your IT and other internal systems – is familiarity with EMIS an advantage, for example?
4. Are there thorough and consistent checks by the agency of each locum's credentials? This should include G.M.C. and JCPTGP/PMETB accreditation and PCT Supplementary listings. Follow-up checks on at least two job references are also essential.
5. Does the agency conduct checks for CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) Enhanced Disclosure? This is mandatory for all teachers and is considered a sensible precaution for locums, who may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults, to ensure there is no criminal record of concern.

Ambition 24locums offers one of the most advanced and comprehensive systems in the UK for compliance and safety in the management and booking of medical agency staff. Enterprise ICT is a unique staff management system developed for locum and nurse registration, compliance, selection and booking: resulting from 100,000 hours of development time in-house over six years.

For further information on locum jobs and selection: [www.ambition24hourslocum.co.uk](http://www.ambition24hourslocum.co.uk) Group House, 92 - 96 Lind Road, Sutton, SM1 4PL, [info@a24locums.co.uk](mailto:info@a24locums.co.uk)

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